

TEXTS

Most of the history and social-science textbooks in the nation's public schools "ignore religion," fail to promote "family values," and demonstrate a "strong liberal" political bias, a federal study soon to be published contends.

See Page 10.

TESTS

In a successful first attempt to develop student test scores that are comparable on a state-by-state basis, the Southern Regional Education Board has found that reading skills of students in three Southern states are above the national average.

See Page 5.

AND TEACHERS

On the basis of a 50-state survey, the Council for Basic Education charges that monitoring of "out-of-field" teaching is almost nonexistent and that thousands of teachers work in areas in which they are neither trained nor certified.

See Page 6.

EDUCATION WEEK

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Justice's Probes of Schools Questioned

Sources See Little Proof
To Back Reynolds's Claim

By Tom Mirga

WASHINGTON—The Justice Department's top civil-rights official disclosed in newspaper interviews on Sept. 20 that his office is broadening a four-year-old investigation to determine whether public schools have practiced discrimination by deliberately downgrading their curricula to enable higher percentages of minority students to graduate.

But Secretary of Education William J. Bennett and his immediate predecessor said two days later that they were completely unaware of the initiative, and one Education Department official last week described the incident as "a real foul-up."

In addition, former employees in the office of William Bradford Reynolds, the assistant attorney general for civil rights, said last week that they and their colleagues who remain in the office have seen no evidence that the new investigations are under way. Furthermore, they said that little, if any, action has been taken over the past four years with respect to the initial investigations.

Mr. Reynolds's comments to reporters from *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* also drew strong protests from public-school officials and civil-rights groups. And the comments thrust Mr. Reynolds back into the limelight just two months after he was denied a promotion by a Senate committee, in part due to allegations that he has attempted to weaken fed-

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William Bradford Reynolds

E.D. Enforces Handicapped-Aid Ceiling; Cuts Massachusetts Grant, Asks Refund

By Alina Tugend

WASHINGTON—For the first time in the history of the federal special-education law, Education Department officials have denied some funding to a state on the grounds that its "count" of handicapped pupils exceeds a limit specified by the law.

With no advance notification or publicity, the department has cut more than \$1.5 million from Massachusetts' 1986 special-education grant—and is asking to be reim-

bursed for \$676,256 granted in 1985—because it says the state's "child count" in both years exceeded a ceiling set a decade ago by drafters of P. L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

P. L. 94-142, which became law in 1975, specifies that the number of special-education students receiving federal aid in a state may not exceed 12 percent of that state's total 5- through 17-year-old population, even if the state's own special-education law covers a wider population.

But as federal officials pledged last week to continue the department's increased scrutiny of enrollments and population figures, officials in Massachusetts and elsewhere urged a re-examination of the law in light of the realities facing state special-education programs.

Massachusetts, they predicted, will soon be joined by other states whose expanding special-education populations are ineligible for federal aid.

According to Education Department figures, four states—Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, and New Jersey—have already reached the 11 percent mark.

States annually submit child-count figures to the Education Department's office of special education and rehabilitative services, where they are used to calculate the amount of money the state will receive for special-education grants under P. L. 94-142.

The fiscal-year 1986 grants were distrib-

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Bilingual Policies Have Failed, Need Revisions, Bennett Says

By James Hertling

WASHINGTON—Asserting that federal bilingual-education efforts have failed to benefit non-English-speaking children, Secretary of Education William J. Bennett last week announced that he would propose regulatory and legislative changes to give school districts more flexibility in teaching such students.

"After 17 years of federal involvement, and after \$1.7 billion in federal funding, we have no evidence that the children whom we sought to help—that the children who deserve our help—have benefited," Mr. Bennett said in a speech prepared for delivery in New York City to the Association for

a Better New York, a group of civic leaders. His office released the text of his remarks.

Mr. Bennett, in his first policy statement on the issue, said Congressionally mandated restrictions on teaching methods have hampered effective bilingual instruction.

At a press conference here following the speech, Undersecretary Gary L. Bauer said the Reagan Administration may recommend more bilingual-education money if the Congress agrees to give districts flexibility in its use. "Flexibility and more resources could go hand in hand," he said.

Excerpts of speech, page 11

The program's budget this year is \$173 million; the House Appropriations Committee has recommended a freeze in 1986.

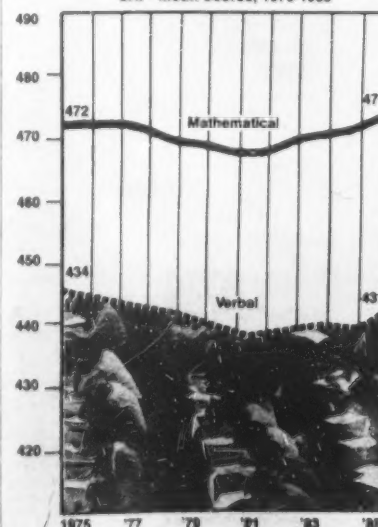
The Congress last year for the first time authorized the use of federal funds for teaching methods other than transitional bilingual education—in which a student learns basic skills in his native language while studying the English language.

But lawmakers rejected an Administration proposal to eliminate the mandate for the transitional bilingual method and instead earmarked 4 percent of bilingual-ed-

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Upward Surge

SAT® Mean Scores, 1975-1985



The jump in S.A.T. scores is the highest in 22 years. Story on page 5.

Where the Action Is

Education Lobbies Shift Focus to States

By Cindy Currence

WASHINGTON—Life changed this year for August W. Steinhilber, associate executive director and general counsel for the National School Boards Association.

In December, Mr. Steinhilber was the chief federal lobbyist for the N.S.B.A. A month later, with an expanded office, twice the staff, and an annual budget of more than \$500,000, he became the head of a new N.S.B.A. unit called the Center for State Legislation and School Law.

"We came to the conclusion here that the action had shifted from the federal level to the state level," Mr. Steinhilber says.

With increasing frequency, education lobbyists here are finding that national education policy no longer emanates exclusively from Washington. And while some may lack the new title and staff Mr. Steinhilber has at his disposal, all have turned their attention and resources to new horizons.

The shift of focus from Capitol Hill to the state capitals is a trend born of necessity as well as opportunity, say leaders of national education organizations.

They credit the current educational-reform movement—sparked by a federal report but led by state governors and legisla-

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IN SUMMARY

Assessing the Whole Mission

The National Catholic Educational Association, in response to a survey of administrators, may establish a new accrediting agency for Roman Catholic schools. **Story on Page 4.**

Brouhaha Over Birth Control

The Chicago school board is embroiled in a controversy over whether it sanctioned distribution of birth-control devices by a school-based health clinic for students. **Story on Page 8.**

Making Progress

A survey by the Council of Great City Schools suggests that the reform movement has so far produced improved performance in the basic skills and better school attendance. **Story on Page 8.**

Too Good To Be True?

Faced with the threat of rising energy costs, school districts are turning to commercial energy-management firms that charge only a percentage of the savings that result from conservation measures. **Story on Page 9.**

Focusing on the Early Years

Two national studies are being initiated to examine preschool and elementary-level education and the effects that schooling and care in the early years have on later development. **Story on Page 9.**

Hopes Go Up in Smoke

An 8-cent federal cigarette tax, scheduled to expire this week, is likely to be renewed by the Congress, at the expense of states that acted last year to continue the tax on their own. **Story on Page 12.**

Leaner Loans

As part of a budget reconciliation measure, Congressional panels have moved to begin trimming \$800 million over three years from the Guaranteed Student Loan Program. **Story on Page 13.**

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THE WEEK

FEDERAL

Chapter 2 Rules Omit 'High Cost' Requirement

The Education Department, noting its disagreement with a statement of Congressional intent, says it will not require states to earmark extra Chapter 2 block-grant money

for "high cost" pupils.

New regulations for Chapter 2 contained in the Sept. 18 *Federal Register* mainly address questions of program administration, as required by technical amendments that were passed by the Congress in 1983.

In the report accompanying those amendments, the Congress stated its intent that "state Chapter 2 distribution formulas provide adjusted allocations to local educational agencies with only the greatest number or percentages of high-cost children, rather than allocations to

L.E.A.'s with any number or percentage of such children."

Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, however, pointed out that this statement did not change the law but only indicated Congressional intent and that incorporating this change into regulations "would undermine the decisionmaking authority" of state officials, according to the *Federal Register* notice.

States may use 20 percent of their Chapter 2 money—\$500 million this year—for administrative costs; the rest is distributed to L.E.A.'s based on a state-approved formula.

NATIONAL

Sex Bias Still Present In Public Schools, New Study Indicates

Girls in elementary school are still perceived more favorably, disciplined less harshly, and graded more generously than boys, but boys receive more attention, encouragement, and constructive criticism, ac-

cording to a new report by the Project on Equal Educational Rights of the National Organization for Women.

The report, "Learning Her Place: Sex Bias in the Elementary Classroom," integrates a variety of earlier studies of elementary education with current data describing the treatment of females in the classroom. It notes, for example, that girls get 90 percent of their criticism from teachers on the "intellectual inadequacy" of their work, while boys are criticized half on intellectual content and half on form or style problems.

"Boys emerge from this environment ready to move ahead and surpass their female classmates," the report states, while girls are left with "nagging doubts" about their abilities even when they earn superior grades.

NEER also released a state-by-state survey of progress toward educational equity in four areas: women's and girls' participation in interscholastic sports, the number of women school administrators, the percentage of women teachers and supervisors of computer classes, and the movement toward sex equity in vocational education.

STATES

Washington Governor Names Panel on Education Funding

Gov. Booth Gardner of Washington has established an advisory council on education funding to develop an alternative to the state's school-finance system.

The Governor issued the executive order last month and named Orin Smith, the state budget director, to chair the panel. Other members include Frank Brouillette, state superintendent of schools, and several state legislators and members of the state board of education.

Under Washington's school-finance system, the state is responsible for providing 100 percent of the funds for basic K-12 education, according to Laird Harris, the Governor's chief policy aide and deputy director of the office of financial management.

Local districts are allowed to enact excess "enrichment" levies to raise additional funds for the public schools, Mr. Harris said. In their recent levies, however, school districts that enroll 80 percent of the state's schoolchildren have exceeded a state-imposed cap, raising more than an additional 10 percent above their state-aid allotment.

Because of the state's "severe" budget constraints, Mr. Harris explained, the legislature has enacted a law that suspends that lim-

it for the next three years.

But he noted that it was understood when the bill was passed that there would be an effort to look at alternatives to the current system.

The advisory panel charged with that task has until Nov. 15, 1986, to report back to the Governor on how best to provide funding for schools. Mr. Harris predicted that the 1987 legislature will address the school-finance issue.

Utah Board Studies Mandating Preschool For Handicapped

The Utah Board of Education has directed its staff to study the concept of mandating preschool classes for handicapped children.

"Early intervention has been shown by research to be beneficial to handicapped children and our state has no mandate for that service," said Mae Taylor, a specialist in the state education department's special-education division.

An estimated 2,500 3- and 4-year-old handicapped children would be served by the proposal, Ms. Taylor said. A legislative subcommittee that considered such a measure last month said it would cost approximately \$6.7 million in its first year.

The staff, which was directed to study testimony submitted for and against the proposed mandate, will be asked on Oct. 11 to recommend a level of funding for the program and to study whether the funding should be included in the education department's budget or in the budget of the department of social services.

It is likely that the legislature will consider bills on the mandate in January. A bill submitted to lawmakers last year without a funding component died in committee, according to Ms. Taylor.

Utah does not mandate preschool programs or kindergarten for non-handicapped children. Handicapped children are required to begin school at age 5.

Changes Called for In Wyoming's Vocational Effort

Wyoming's current method of funding vocational-education programs needs retooling, suggests a report from the state department of education.

The funding system, which provides about twice as much state money for students in vocational-education programs as for regular students, "invites rearrangement of classes to earn extra funds," the researchers found.

Under the arrangement, school districts are required to spend their vocational-education money on students but not on programs per se. Consequently, said Audrey Cotherman, assistant state superintendent of public instruction, districts often spend some of the vocational funds they receive on other programs.

The report, mandated by the legislature in its 1984 session, recommends that lawmakers increase the amount of per-pupil spending on vocational education but that they revise the formula to ensure that the funds actually are spent on vocation-

9-Point Jump in S.A.T. Scores Is Highest in 22 Years

Report Cites 'Disturbing' Drop in Number of Blacks Taking Test

By Lynn Olson

The average combined score of graduating high-school students on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, one of the two standardized examinations most often required for admission to the nation's colleges, jumped 9 points this year, the sharpest single-year gain since 1963, the College Board announced last week.

But the average composite score on the other major college-admissions test, the American College Testing Assessment, remained nearly stable, according to the American College Testing Program, which also released its 1985 test results last week.

At a press conference in New York City, College Board officials reported that the average scores on the S.A.T. rose 5 points on the verbal section, to 431, and 4 points on the mathematics section, to 475. The

test is graded on a scale of 200 to 800.

The board also noted a "disturbing" decrease in the number of black students taking the examination, but said the decline did not affect overall test averages.

On the same day, the American College Testing Program announced from its headquarters in Iowa City, Iowa, that the average A.C.T. composite score rose 0.1 percentage points, from 18.5 to 18.6. The assessment, graded on a scale of 1 to 36, includes tests in English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social studies.

Each examination was taken by approximately 1 million students in the high-school graduating class of 1985. Both included questionnaires from which such characteristics as college and career goals, grade-point average, and ethnic background were determined.

The A.C.T. primarily serves students and colleges in 28 states in the Midwest, South, and West, where many public colleges and universities require the test for admission. The S.A.T., an admissions tool for most private higher-education institutions, is used more extensively by students and colleges in the East and on the West Coast.

Reforms Paid Off

For the S.A.T., developed and administered by the Educational Testing Service, this year's gains mark the fourth consecutive year in which at least either the verbal or the mathematics scores have improved.

The four-year upswing follows a 17-year decline in S.A.T. scores from 1964 to 1980 and 1981, when they reached their lowest mark on record. With this year's scores, the combined average for the verbal and mathematics sections has now re-

turned to its 1975 level.

George H. Hanford, president of the College Board, said the recent upward trend indicates that efforts to improve high-school education, begun in the mid-1970's and accelerated by recent education-reform initiatives, "have begun to pay off."

He said the upswing in test scores suggests not only that "instruction in the schools has been improving," but also that "high-school students are giving greater attention to academic study."

This year's test gains, Mr. Hanford noted, occurred even though the number taking the S.A.T. increased by more than 12,600, a factor that would normally tend to lower average scores.

'Broader Phenomenon' Seen

Frank B. Womer, professor of education at the University of Michigan and director of the Michigan School Testing Service, agreed that the increase in S.A.T. scores represents

"more than a modest gain."

Because it follows a smaller series of increases over the past several years, Mr. Womer said, it probably represents "a general turnaround in certain levels of abilities among students."

But he advised caution in analyzing the trend. "I don't think we can credit all of this automatically to schools, any more than I thought the schools were to blame automatically when scores were going down," said Mr. Womer. "I think this represents a much broader phenomenon in society, that educational excellence is more respected now than it was for a period of time."

Changes Insignificant

In contrast, the A.C.T.'s vice president of public affairs, David S. Crockett, said changes in A.C.T. scores have not been highly significant.

"We're obviously pleased that the scores are heading in the right direction," he said, "but I would not dance in the streets saying it's a sign that the reformation has been successful."

Continued on Page 16

Southern Pupils' Test Scores Top U.S. Average

By Lynn Olson

The reading abilities of 11th graders in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia are above the national average for their age group, according to data released by the Southern Regional Education Board last week.

The results, announced at an S.R.E.B. conference in Austin, Tex., represent the first attempt by individual states to administer a test from the National Assessment of Educational Progress to a sample of their students in order to make national, regional, and state-by-state comparisons.

New York State and Wyoming also used the NAEP tests to assess the performance of students in their states for the first time this year.

The three Southern states tested a sample of 11th graders. New York State and Wyoming tested a sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 11.

Students in the two non-Southern states also performed above the national average for their age group.

The S.R.E.B. presented its 13-page report, "Measuring Student Achievement: Comparable Test Results for Participating Southern States, the South, and the Nation," to a group of legislators from 15 states that it has invited to participate in a similar assessment of 11th graders' reading and writing abilities next year.

In presenting the results, S.R.E.B. officials noted that state testing programs "almost by design" have made it impossible to compare student achievement from state to state.

"Of the many 'national tests,' no one is used by more than a few states in the nation," said Mark D. Musick, S.R.E.B.'s director of state services and information.

"Because different test forms are used at different grade levels at different times of the year to get scores reported in different ways, state comparisons for all practical purposes are impossible. The comparisons to 'national averages' on these

tests are often to averages determined years ago and updated about once in every decade," said Mr. Musick.

The joint project between the Educational Testing Service, which administers NAEP, the S.R.E.B., and the three states proves that such national and state-by-state comparisons are "feasible," he said.

Varying Costs

To participate in the study, each of the three Southern states paid the E.T.S. some \$25,000 to test a representative sample of more than 2,000 11th graders in 1983-84.

New York State tested approximately 17,000 students at a cost of \$20,000. Wyoming tested some 3,800 students at a cost of \$90,000, and spent another \$10,000 on a testing advisory committee.

The differences in cost reflect variations in the ages and numbers of students sampled, the data collected, and the analyses conducted, according to Archie E. Lapointe, executive director of NAEP. Wyoming, for example, conducted a complete assessment, measuring students' writing abilities as well as their reading skills, and tested students in three different grades.

Local districts in Wyoming also had the option of "piggy backing" onto the state assessment by conducting districtwide assessments of similar student skills.

Unlike most states, Wyoming currently does not have a statewide testing program and is hoping to use NAEP for that purpose, according to Lynn Simons, state superintendent of education.

Major Findings

Among the major findings from the five states:

- Black 11th graders in all three Southern states were reading at or above the average level of their peers across the nation; the Virginia average was significantly above the national average.

- Black students as a group scored significantly lower than white students in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia. The differences were similar to the national gap between black and white test scores, with

black 11th graders reading at only a slightly higher level than white 7th graders.

- Wyoming's 4th and 8th graders performed as well as their peers nationwide on the writing assessment, while 11th graders scored better than those nationwide.

- In Virginia, a significantly larger percentage of students were reading at the "adept" or "advanced" level than in the nation as a whole. These are the levels required for understanding high-school textbooks and for synthesizing and learning relatively complicated information.

- Students in all three Southern states answered correctly a significantly higher percentage of items having to do with literal and inferential comprehension and with study skills than did students across the country.

- Pupils in New York State scored better than their peers nationwide on 85 percent of the multiple-choice exercises and worse on 15 percent.

- Reading skills of children of working mothers in Wyoming were no different than those of students of nonworking mothers. They actually read slightly better, but the difference is not statistically significant, according to Ms. Simons.

Worthwhile Investment

Claude A. Sandy, director of testing for the Virginia Department of Education, said that the assessment was not "all that cheap," but that "it was probably worth it."

"We don't have any other testing program that we can conduct for \$25,000," he said.

Thomas H. Fisher, director of student assessment in Florida, noted that the new sampling techniques developed by the E.T.S., in particular, have enabled the three Southern states to get information about the full spectrum of 11th graders from a relatively small number of students much less expensively than was formerly possible.

Testing directors were particularly pleased that NAEP provided more up-to-date and representative national norms than the states have had in the past.

"The important thing about this whole project was not so much what the actual results were," said Joyce R. McLarty, assistant commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Ed-

ucation, "but that it was possible for three states to drop their mutual defenses and, in essence, cooperate with one another to the point where we could make public test results."

Ms. McLarty said there was "a great deal of excitement" at the S.R.E.B. conference about the test results and that "quite a number of states have told me they're thinking of participating next year."

Future Plans

All three Southern states indicated that they will participate in the sample test of 11th graders in 1986, and are particularly interested in the writing assessment that will be given at that time.

New York State Commissioner of Education Gordon Ambach said his state will test 4th, 8th, and 11th graders this school year in the areas of computer competence, mathematics, reading, and science, and, in the 11th grade only, United States history and Western literature.

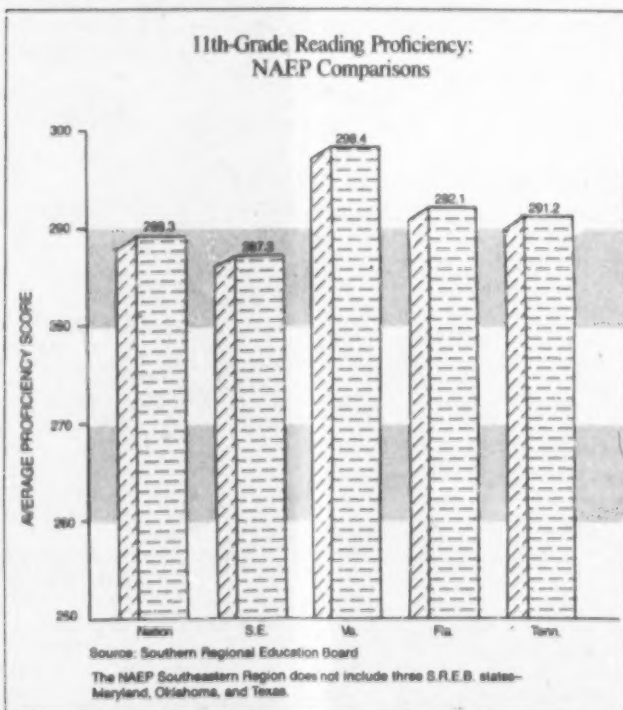
The Wyoming legislature has already approved funding for the state to test students in all three grades in computer science, math, reading, and science in 1986. The department of education has requested funding to participate in the 1988 NAEP assessment.

The Georgia legislature also has approved that state's participation in NAEP in 1986 as part of its education-reform act.

Massachusetts is planning to conduct a full-scale assessment of its own in 1986, using the NAEP test battery in mathematics, reading, and science. The assessment will test all students in grades 3, 7, and 11—some 180,000 youngsters—unlike the samples conducted in other states.

Except for school buildings with the smallest student populations, it should allow for comparisons on a school-by-school basis, as well as at the district, regional, state, and national levels, said Allan S. Hartman, director of the state education department's bureau of research and assessment.

The project, which will cost some \$800,000, has been contracted out to a New Hampshire based testing firm. This past summer, the Massachusetts legislature passed a school-reform act mandating a statewide curriculum assessment.



Jump in S.A.T.'s Highest in 22 Years; Math, Verbal Scores Both Up

Continued from Page 5

ful." A.C.T. scores have remained relatively stable for almost a decade, he noted, after declining steadily from 1970 to 1976.

But statistically, Mr. Crockett said, there is not much difference between the average gains recorded this year on the A.C.T. and the S.A.T. "Their increase was a little over 1 percent and ours was a little less than half a percent," he said. "So theirs went up a little more than ours, but we're still not talking about huge differences."

The scoring changes in the four subjects measured by the A.C.T. varied. The average on the English section remained stable at 18.1, natural sciences rose from 21.0 to 21.2, and social studies rose from 17.4 to 17.5. The average mathematics score fell from 17.3 to 17.2.

Minority Participation

All minority groups and both sexes showed gains in S.A.T. scores this year, with the most dramatic gains among Puerto Rican students, whose average scores rose 10 points.

But the percentage of blacks taking the exam dropped from 9.1 percent in 1984 to 8.9 percent in 1985. The decline means that some 2,000 fewer black students took the S.A.T. last year, according to College Board officials.

"When this fall-off in numbers is coupled with other data we have gathered on the educational status of blacks," Mr. Hanford said, "the decline is disturbing."

In a study released earlier this year, "Equality and Excellence: The Educational Status of Black Ameri-

cans," the board reported that college attendance and completion rates of blacks have dropped since 1975, despite the fact that their high-school graduation rates have improved over the past two decades.

Blacks also accounted for about 8.9 percent of A.C.T. test-takers last year. But that proportion has remained relatively constant for the A.C.T. since 1980. The average scores for blacks, according to A.C.T. officials, did not change significantly between 1984 and 1985.

Remaining Gap

On both tests, the average total scores for black students continued to trail those of all other ethnic groups. Their average on the S.A.T. was 346 on the verbal section and 376 on the mathematics section, compared with an average for whites of 449 on the verbal section and 491 on the math section.

The average for blacks on the A.C.T. was 13.3 on the English section and 9.9 on the math. For whites, it was 18.8 in English and 18.0 in math.

The percentage of minority students in general taking the S.A.T. climbed to an all-time high of 20 percent this year, primarily due to the greater number of Asian-American students taking the exam. But the percentage of minority participants remained about the same for the A.C.T.

Asian Americans continued to outperform other students in mathematics on both tests. Their average math score was 26 points higher than that of whites on the S.A.T. and 2.4 percentage points higher on the A.C.T.

Women—who accounted for about 52 percent of S.A.T. test-takers and 54 percent of A.C.T. test-takers—scored lower than men on both exams.

But results from the two tests were contradictory in verbal-skills assessments. On the S.A.T., men outperformed women on the verbal portion of the test, with average scores of 437 versus 425, but on the A.C.T. women outperformed men on the English section, with average scores of 18.6 versus 17.6.

Women lagged significantly behind men on the mathematics portions of both tests.

New Career Interests

From responses given on the accompanying questionnaires, both testing agencies noted substantial changes in the academic and career goals of women during the decade. In particular, women are expressing greater interest in business and commerce careers than in the mid-1970's, with the number of female test-takers considering business majors having tripled since 1973, according to the College Board.

And, said Robert G. Cameron, executive director of research and development for the College Board, "women have been reporting much greater increases in the study of math and the physical sciences than men, although men still take an average of one semester more of science and math than women."

The two testing agencies also confirmed that the number of students hoping to complete graduate study continues to rise. A.C.T. officials attributed part of this increase to a greater percentage of women ex-

pressing interest in professional degrees.

Twelve years ago, noted College Board officials, men were twice as likely as women to have professional-degree aspirations. But this difference, they said, has almost disappeared.

Student interest in education careers, Mr. Cameron said, increased slightly for the second consecutive year, to 4.7 percent, and the scores of students planning to major in education rose 6 points on the verbal section and 7 points on the math section.

The proportion of A.C.T. test-takers expressing interest in education majors—7 percent—was the same as that recorded in 1984.

Academic Press

Both A.C.T. and College Board officials said grade inflation, though more prevalent than 15 years ago, has begun to decline. The College Board's Mr. Hanford said the finding may suggest not only that grading standards have become more rigorous but that students are taking more academic courses.

For the ninth consecutive year, students taking the S.A.T. reported taking more courses than the previous year's seniors in each of six academic subject areas. Also, a greater number of students had taken honors courses and planned to apply for advanced-placement college credit in all subjects.

The A.C.T. tried to assess the impact of more rigorous course work on test performance, calculating the difference in the average test scores of students who had taken a "core" of academic courses—including four or

more years of English, three or more years of mathematics, three or more years of natural sciences, and three or more years of social studies—and those who had not.

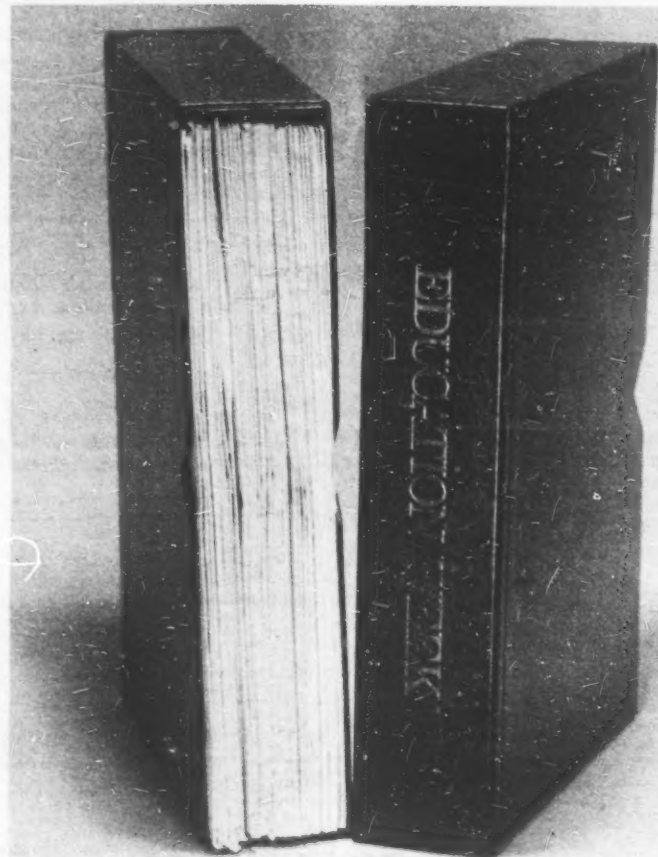
Students who had taken a "core" curriculum, the test officials found, performed significantly better in all four subject areas, with an average composite score of 21.0 versus 17.2. The largest performance gap between the two groups of students was in mathematics.

The A.C.T. also reported a statistical correlation between school size and test performance. Test-takers from very small and very large high schools, they said, did not fare as well as their peers. Those from schools with 199 or fewer students or 900 or more students scored below the national average on the A.C.T., while those from schools with 200 to 899 students scored above the national average.

Financial Data

The median family income reported by students taking the S.A.T. in 1985 rose by 6 percent, from \$30,400 to \$32,200. Median income of population groups ranged from a low of \$17,100 for black families to a high of \$34,700 for white families.

The College Board's college-scholarship service estimates that only 27 percent of test-takers' families are able to pay fully the average annual cost of education at public four-year institutions, and only 12 percent can fully afford the cost of private four-year colleges. These percentages may be underestimated because of students' inability to reflect adequately their families' assets, board officials said.



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